

a revolution of eyes

how long, old man, how long?
four hundred years looking at the ground
 of this hot cruel land
four hundred years looking at the white man's shoes/
'fraid to meet his eyes -- to see his
 fear reflecting mine --
marbling the separating air/

(Lord, mine eyes have not seen the glory ...)
they have seen the first fruit of my loins
 grafted to the limb of an oak tree

the dark terror of violation in a black girl's
 eyes --

the bewildered pupiled tears of a young
 child branded 'nigger'

& i have seen the preacher toming
 from the pulpit
 telling me work all day
 live on hay
 keep out of Mr. Charley's way --
for cake by the pound when the
 trumpet doth sound ...

& i'm TIRED, LORD GOD, i'm tired/

blind to evil no more
now i shall look upon it as a man --
 though that sight be latticed by steel
 or warm-misted by the blood of my youth

hard land of promise you will be sweet
 my eyes will see to that

how long?
 not long/

-- nelson barr